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## ABSTRACT

The Chancellor's charge to the President sets forth the principles and guidelines each will follow in their respective roles. The Board of Regents of the State of New York sets educational policy and rules for the execution of the policy. The newly elected President of the State University and Commissioner of Education will execute the policy. Chancellor Black urges President and Commissioner Ambach to help sustain educational quality and preserve the structure of educational governance of the State. The inaugural address of Gordon M. Ambach discusses the origins of educational governance and the changing stages of learning today. The following five problems are pinpointed: unprecedented decline in achievement; enrollment decline; the need for educating all age groups simultaneously; an aging population with more leisure but in danger of becoming occupationally obsolete; and increasing personal isolation. He offers the following suggestions: educational strategies should be adjusted to different assumptions that together address both parent and child needs; educational objectives should be reconsidered at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels from the perspective of lifelong learning; the learning institutions such as museums, libraries, and television should be brought into more productive combination with the resources of schools and colleges; and the psychological and physiological changes of adulthood should be considered by educational designers. (SW)

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## CHANGING STAGES OF LEARNING

*Inaugural Address of*

**GORDON M. AMBACH**

**President of The University  
of the State of New York  
and**

**Commissioner of Education**

*and*

*Charge to the President  
by*

**Chancellor THEODORE M. BLACK**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,  
EDUCATION & WELFARE  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF  
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**THE NINETY-FIFTH CONVOCATION**

*October 26, 1977*



**THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
Albany**

HE 010 543

## THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

### *Regents of The University (with years when terms expire)*

|      |                                                                              |                       |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1981 | THEODORE M. BLACK, A.B., Litt.D., LL.D., Pd.D., D.C.L.,<br>L.H.D. Chancellor | Sands Point           |
| 1987 | CARL H. PFORZHEIMER, JR., A.B., M.B.A., D.C.S., H.H.D.<br>Vice Chancellor    | Purchase              |
| 1978 | ALEXANDER J. ALLAN, JR., LL.D., Litt.D.                                      | Troy                  |
| 1986 | KENNETH B. CLARK, A.B., M.S., Ph.D., LL.D., L.H.D.,<br>D.Sc.                 | Hastings<br>on Hudson |
| 1983 | HAROLD E. NEWCOMB, B.A.                                                      | Owego                 |
| 1988 | WILLARD A. GENRICH, LL.B., L.H.D., LL.D.                                     | Buffalo               |
| 1982 | EMLYN I. GRIFFITH, A.B., J.D.                                                | Rome                  |
| 1983 | MARY ALICE KENDALL, B.S.                                                     | Irondequoit           |
| 1984 | JORGE L. BATISTA, B.A., J.D., LL.D.                                          | Bronx                 |
| 1982 | LOUIS E. YAVNER, LL.B.                                                       | New York              |
| 1979 | LAURA BRADLEY CHODOS, B.A., M.A.                                             | Clifton Park          |
| 1980 | MARTIN C. BARELL, B.A., I.A., LL.B.                                          | Kings Point           |
| 1981 | JOSEPH R. BONGIORNO, B.S., M.D.                                              | Brooklyn              |
| 1984 | LOUISE P. MATTEONI, B.A., M.A., Ph.D.                                        | Bayside               |
| 1981 | J. EDWARD MEYER, B.A., LL.B.                                                 | Chappaqua             |

## THE CHANCELLOR'S CHARGE TO THE PRESIDENT

Given by Chancellor Theodore M. Black  
of the Board of Regents of The University of the State of New York  
at the Inauguration of Gordon M. Ambach  
as President of The University and Commissioner of Education  
on Wednesday, October 26, 1977,  
at the 95th Convocation of the Regents of The University,  
held at the Convention Center of the Empire State Plaza  
at Albany, New York

Gordon M. Ambach, the Regents of The University of the State of New York, in fulfillment of their constitutional duty, have chosen you to serve at their pleasure as President of The University and Commissioner of Education.

Speaking for the Regents, as their Chancellor, it is my responsibility to set forth for you, and for us all, those principles and guidelines we will follow together in the years ahead.

Let me reassure you at the outset that the Regents understand fully our respective roles. We set educational policy for the State and establish rules for the execution of that policy. The execution itself is your job, not ours; the administration of the State Education Department and the system over which you preside is your charge, not the Regents'.

Mr. President, keep in mind always that the one great goal of education is, and must be, the attainment of *excellence*.

Knowing that perfection is never within human grasp, know also that perfection must always be striven for, mightily and without cease. Keep your mind's eye firmly fixed upon that goal, never letting it be diverted by competing considerations which, however politically seductive or superficially popular they may be, must remain secondary to our pursuit of excellence.

Remember, Mr. President, that the well-being of our State depends in considerable part upon our success in sustaining educational quality. The availability of good schools and colleges, of fine cultural facilities and of a well-trained work force make the Empire State an attractive place to live, raise one's family, locate one's business and earn one's livelihood—which in turn generates the fiscal

resources needed to provide first-rate public services—including education—to New York's people.

Be always proud and protective of that freedom from political control and interference which New Yorkers have long insisted upon for their educational system—but remember that no one agency of government can operate in a vacuum. Success comes only through open, friendly, effective collaboration among all concerned elements of State government—and success *can* be achieved without sacrificing anyone's independence.

Mr. President, be ever zealous to preserve that overarching structure of educational governance which makes New York the envy of every other state, assuring as it does the cooperative interaction of all member institutions of New York's educational community. By the wisdom of your administration, show the world how well this governance works, and why its fragmentation would be disastrous.

Be ever aware that in education, as in all of life, healthy and fair competition is the surest guarantor of quality—and that such competition can itself be guaranteed only by the flourishing coexistence of both public and independent schools and colleges. Direct your efforts to the strengthening of this essential pluralism.

In accepting necessary and welcome Federal dollar aid, Mr. President, take care that it does not suborn the surrender to Washington of that authority over education which the United States Constitution reserves to the states and their people.

Remember always that this authority has been entrusted to us by *all* the people *for* all the people. See to it, then, that educational opportunity is made available equitably to all our citizens without discrimination.

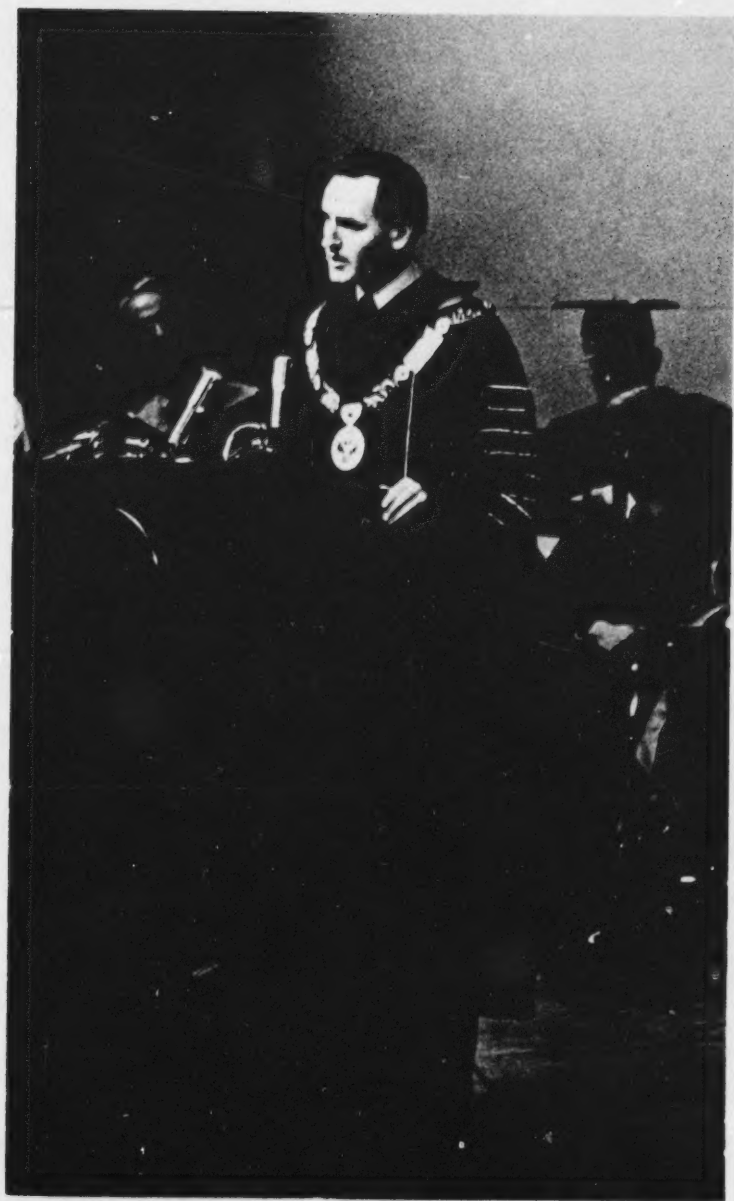
In so doing, Mr. President, bear in mind that equal opportunity does not mandate equal outcomes. We would do a grave disservice to anyone by handing him a prize before he finishes the race. Bestow the gift of motivation upon those students intellectually drugged by the certainty of an effortless graduation. Recall the Regents' *caveat* of a few years ago that the newly open doors of higher education must not be revolving doors. Shore up, with all the strength at your command, the value of every New York diploma and every New York degree.

Be aware that the ability to retrieve factual data from one's memory bank does not of itself make an educated man or woman. To do that, we must generate in each individual in our charge the power to think, to reason logically and calculate rationally, to read, to comprehend and understand the significance of what is read, to express thoughts clearly through the written and spoken word—in short, to

do well those things which distinguish humans from animals. Keep these priorities ever in mind.

In your judicial role, Mr. President, be fair and compassionate, never allowing the cramped verbiage of laws and regulations to hamper your generous application of that priceless ingredient, common sense.

Finally, Mr. President, as we move into the third century of New York's statehood, and as you formally enter upon the arduous duties of President and Commissioner, be assured that you do so with the full faith, hope, trust and confidence of your friends and colleagues, the Regents of The University.



## CHANGING STAGES OF LEARNING

**Inaugural Address  
of  
Gordon M. Ambach  
President of The University of the State of New York  
and Commissioner of Education**

Governor Carey, Chancellor Black, distinguished members of the platform party, honored guests, colleagues in education and friends:

I am privileged to be in your company for this 95th Convocation of The University of the State of New York in a year of Bicentennial celebration. I am honored to share this platform with those who lead our State government in public commitment to education; the reverend clergy who bring the strength and refreshment of faith and who guide us toward ultimate concern; and, members of our Board of Regents who give direction to education policy.

Mr. Chancellor, I accept your charge with deep humility. I hope and pray to have the sensitivity to learn, the wisdom to judge, and the courage to act as you have charged.

We convene in this new hall situated near the center of this Empire State Plaza which was a dream some 15 years ago and is now coming of age as a place of public service and a public forum. We are proud that a part of this Plaza—the Cultural Education Center—is a part of our University. That structure embodies the connection between cultural and educational institutions and provides a symbolic relationship between The University and other parts of State government. At this time of Convocation, "New York: The State of Art," a display of the three great periods of art presented collaboratively by Governor Carey, the State Council on the Arts, and our Department, may be seen in that center. The exhibit is a strong representation of our theme, "The Educational Role of Cultural Institutions."

This convention hall, our new Cultural Center, and the splendid exhibit would never have happened without the leadership of those who are on the platform today. On behalf of our educational community, I thank you.

In our 200th year of statehood, New Yorkers have been encouraged to learn more about the origins of our governmental processes.

Allow me to add a few words about the origins of educational governance. The two are connected more closely than is usually realized.

New York's Constitution of 1777 contained no specific provision in support of education. But it was assumed that education would always be a necessary support of the Constitution, as was made clear by the principal drafter of the document, John Jay. Jay expressed, perhaps better than any other political leader in that historic year of decision, the conviction that liberty was rooted in learning. Only a people who fully understood their rights could assert them and defend them, Jay declared. And those who won self-government, he added, were obligated to "teach the rising generation to be free."

Once independence had been attained, the New York State Legislature acted swiftly to see that learning opportunities would be widely available. It created in 1784, during the first peacetime session, a comprehensive, unified system of education without precedent anywhere—The University of the State of New York—and assigned general "Controul and Direction" of this new University to a State-delegated, lay Board of Regents. Significantly, one of the earliest Regents elected by the Legislature was John Jay.

This early understanding of the connection between government and education has served the people of New York well. It has formed the basis for making the encouragement of learning one of the State's highest functions, a matter of public concern rather than private interest. And it has permitted establishment of State policies responsive to changing public interests and requirements as our society has been reshaped by different forces, from the political revolution of the 18th century to the technetronic revolution of the 20th century.

Our pattern of governance has provided, in addition, that the member institutions of The University of the State of New York form one cohesive whole. Our system of education is unique in that it encompasses the whole spectrum of learning, whether this learning is provided by schools, colleges, museums, libraries, historical societies, or public television stations. We do not draw exclusionary distinctions between education under public auspices and private auspices, profit-making or not. We support diversity and competition. We have no exclusionary separations by level. All learning is The University's common concern, from the early years of childhood to the advanced years of adulthood.

Equally important, we do not lodge all authority for educational decision making in the same hands. Most decisions are made at the point of contact between the learner and the institution or agency.

The State role is related principally to planning service to the State as a whole, to allocating State resources, and to setting statewide standards of quality.

Here again, there is a sharing of authority, as is represented on this platform.

We have a careful check and balance among executive, legislative and judicial powers in our State government. We have still further divisions of authority within the executive branch for financial control and legal interpretation and litigation. Even beyond these general provisions, the Constitution authorizes a lay Board of Regents to assure that fundamental issues of educational policy be determined on a nonpartisan and long-term basis. In the combined State authority for education, the Regents and the Education Department are responsible to determine who shall offer education under what standards. We have, then, an educational system which is comprehensive and yet not monopolistic; a system designed to change only through joint action, no single agent having unilateral power for major revision. Those of us in education have a special responsibility to suggest directions for educational policy. In that spirit, I speak this afternoon about our University and changing stages of learning.

The Greek historian Herodotus observed long ago that no person steps into the same river twice, by which he meant that nothing in life stays completely still. In his time, though, the river moved slowly, almost imperceptibly. But the current now runs with dizzying swiftness. Rapid change is the great reality of our time, from changing technologies to changing value systems.

By many counts, this should be considered a period of great achievement in education. Enrollments are at or near peak. Expenditures in the aggregate are at their highest levels. More persons are engaged in formal or informal programs than ever before. Access to educational opportunities is greater. The calls for growth and access made consistently by my predecessors on similar occasions have been heeded generally. Why then, the current dejection and disappointment in education?

With all of the opportunities—our affluence, the availability of information, the potential for each person to be exposed to practically any knowledge—all favorable indicators for strong educational performance—we live with deep concerns for shortcomings among the young for which we must share responsibility: lack of basic skills; lack of self-discipline; lack of respect for authority; a high crime rate; and high unemployment. And we live with shortcomings among adults: frustration about the lack of control over one's destiny; lack of

capability to assist our children; fears of job loss; and dissatisfaction with work.

The indicators are down and we have trouble adjusting because for most of two centuries they had gone up. We recognize two conditions.

The first is that the economic stringencies affecting all governmental activities in New York State are very real, and expenditures are especially tight in the educational institutions of our State. A fragile balance exists between the resources that provide our tax base and the demand for public service. The tax base must not be eroded by excessive demand.

At the same time, the expectations of the people for opportunities in education have never been higher. Demands for educational services are growing, not slackening. The burden placed on the process of education has never been greater. Education is not only expected to sustain our democratic system of self-government—its original purpose—but also to provide skill in work, technology and, more recently, leisure as well.

In view of the strains caused by these two conditions, it is essential to focus on what is most worth doing in education, and how to achieve the objectives which most command common assent. This requires closer cooperation than ever before among educational institutions and agencies, and stronger connections with forces outside the educational community.

Our working agenda includes improving the quality of education in our urban school systems, developing formulas to relate State aid to the schools to student performance in elementary and secondary education, racial integration, strengthening the governance of higher education, assuring competent performance in all the professions, expanding library and information services, improving education for vocations, expanding services for the disabled, connecting education and health policy, and the assessment of each expenditure for value and effectiveness.

We must, in addition, think well beyond these immediate working tasks to issues of educational meaning and purpose which must command the attention of this entire University. Let me make five separate observations that may seem at first to be unconnected.

1) Student performance levels, particularly in secondary schools and as shown by college entrance examination scores, have dropped in recent years. After years of steady growth, which appeared to be irreversible, the scores have tumbled. We are much disturbed.

2) Enrollments in the elementary and secondary schools of New York State will decline by 100,000 students per year in each of the

next five years. This substantial decline will impact on our colleges in the 1980's.

3) The pace of changing societal practices now requires near simultaneous learning of many subjects by all age groups. One example is the introduction of the metric system. We will shortly be in the circumstance where the system of measures common to nearly every other country in the world, the metric system, is ours. Ironically, youths who have been specifically trained in metrics will be more competent than our adult population.

4) The nation's age profile is changing, or "graying." With the decline in the birthrate from its peak in the late 1950's, the median age in America is on the rise. The median age today is nearly 30; it is expected to climb to 38 a half century from now.

5) We are in danger of becoming individually more isolated at the very time we must be more interdependent. Technology, affluence and mobility have provided us with extraordinary means of traveling afar, or of bringing the world to our chairside so that we might see each detail of events around the globe on our television screen. At the same time, we tend to know our neighbors and families less well. Do they prosper or despair?

Each observation pinpoints a particular problem or a special opportunity for education—unprecedented decline in achievement; enrollment decline; the need for educating all age groups simultaneously; an aging population with more leisure but in danger of becoming occupationally obsolescent; increasing personal isolation.

I suggest we consider these observations as they are related to changing stages of learning. I invite you to think about education and our University, at all its levels, from the perspective of its meaning to adults. Three thoughts are offered.

### **The Education of Parents**

We have long been in error on two assumptions about the education of parents. The first is that parents can keep up with the changing demands of child-rearing at various life stages without having special assistance to learn new tasks and roles. The second is that children, particularly children of the poor, can learn to take new directions in their lives without the support of a parent or caring adult to reinforce those directions. We must adjust educational strategies to different assumptions which address both parent and child needs together.

Urie Bronfenbrenner has described education for parenthood as much more than what happens in schools or colleges or formal programs—it is learning about "our condition," the relation of parent

or caring adult to child in the home, neighborhood, or elsewhere. He has raised the question, "Who cares for those who care?"

Education for parenthood must be directed toward our society at large, not just at parents. It must be informative about the facts of parent-child contact, or lack of contacts. How much time do adults take with their children? What is the quality of that contact? It must inform us of the institutional arrangements, corporate and governmental, which impede or support the parent's role. It must continually remind us that being a parent—a person of enduring and emotional caring—is of such status that our society respects the commitment of time and energy of each parent to child development.

The best predictor of a child's educational success is attainment of the parent. There is no regular and strong growth of each child without help of the parent or caring adult. One of the most important things we can do to strengthen achievement of the young, therefore, is to insure that parents understand child development and have the knowledge and skills to foster growth. This means, generally, the education of two generations together.

As we look at our University and ask what we do now for parent education, the answer is very little.

As we address Bronfenbrenner's question, "Who cares for those who care?", I hope we can answer by saying, "We will."

### **Stages of Youthful Learning**

We have taken for granted that more and more learning can be squeezed into the elementary and secondary program, as though the school years alone were the right time to learn everything one needed to know.

We have expected too much and too little of our schools—too much in that we expect them to support the emotional and moral growth of the child with too little regard for the role played by family or caring adults, religious institutions and community—too little in that we do not set high enough expectations for what they could achieve in the cognitive development of every child.

We have also expected the school and college together to provide a complete preparation for life. If education is an enduring part of life, some of that immense burden is lifted from our institutions.

I suggest we reconsider which educational objectives properly belong at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels from the perspective of lifetime learning; and, no less important, how the strengths of learning institutions such as museums, libraries and television can be brought into more productive combination with the resources of the schools and colleges. We must review whether our

institutional patterns are *in phase* with the stages of personal growth over the full lifespan.

The essentials at the elementary level are to provide young children with the foundation skills of communication and computation, enhance proper physical growth and development, develop creativity through the arts, and instill the rudiments of civic responsibility, or what it means to live responsibly in a free society.

The essence of secondary studies is to help each student strengthen the elementary competencies and to encourage self-discovery to provide each learner with a sense of confidence to perform in some area of established value, be it science, history, creative writing, or music.

The college years constitute a further period of testing what one assumes to be true about oneself against previously unexplored possibilities. They provide a time to let the mind range widely over structured bodies of knowledge in different fields of study, but with the purpose of deciding which field of study to pursue most thoroughly.

As each of us looks back to our school and college years, it is the form or type of experience—the depth or discipline of a particular subject—that is most powerful, not the range of subjects or the breadth of content. There is time for breadth later.

As we worry about improving student performance and a return to higher levels of achievement, which means concentrating on certain skills of communication and computation, we need not abandon other parts of the program but rather defer them to a later stage of learning. If we will reexamine our formal education for the young with relation to the meaning of education to adults, I believe we find insight and guidance to sharpen the purpose and quality of the changing stage of education for the young.

### **Recurrent Education**

It is still widely assumed that only children change and that adults merely age. To one student of the subject, prevailing opinion continues to be that:

"Like a butterfly, an adult is supposed to emerge fully formed and on cue, after a succession of developmental stages in childhood. Equipped with all the accouterments, such as wisdom and rationality, the adult supposedly remains quiescent for another half century or so."

We are not as familiar as we ought to be with the profound psychological and physiological changes that take place during adult years. Scholars such as Erik Erikson indicate there are clearly dis-

cernible "stages of life" and that adult personalities are markedly different in each of them. It's almost like going through adolescence all over again, only for a longer time. We do little about this in any educational design.

Recurrent education has its pioneers outside the education profession as well as in it. Two names that come to mind are Adam Smith and Benjamin Franklin. The first job Smith held after college was giving lectures to Edinburgh business and professional men who paid fees to him to fill in the gaps in their educations. The lectures were not on economics, as one might imagine, but rather on British literature and the philosophy of law, two subjects Smith had pretty much learned on his own. Franklin, a grade-school dropout, became one of the founders of Philadelphia's first library. This was a subscription library, and the adult members pooled their resources to buy books for their common use. The venture was apparently quite successful, judging from Franklin's claim that the library had—and I quote—"improved the general conservation and made the common tradesmen and farmers as intelligent as most gentlemen from other countries."

Today, adults are flocking to American colleges by the millions, with the result that approximately one-third of all students in higher education nationally are 25 or older. By 1980, such students will account for a full 40 percent of the total.

Education in the adult years occurs outside of educational institutions as well as in them. It may or may not be directed toward a career. It does not necessarily lead to academic credit. It often involves short-term commitments of time, rather than traditional measures like semesters or school years. And it usually allows wide freedom of choice about what we will study, when and how. American ingenuity has provided forms for every interest.

Our concern must be for the quality and not just the quantity of the learning; not just the addition of a course or subject here and there but a comprehensive policy to enable those who guide the decisions that shape our society—leaders in government, business, industry, labor, the arts and education—to participate periodically in study or reexamination of the foundation works in the arts and sciences—the great contributions of all ages—and relate them to the complex issues of today.

The Bicentennial has brought back certain recollections. How valuable to refresh ourselves by regularly reading Locke and Hobbes, Hume and Montesquieu, the *Federalist* papers and the 18th-century American political philosophers at the time in our lives when we can really understand them.

The late Lionel Trilling sensed the dimensions of unfolding adult life, which he expressed in a thought-provoking way. Trilling used to say that people don't read books; books read people. As he explained this reversal of the usual order:

"I have been read by Eliot's poems and by *Ulysses* and by *Remembrance of Things Past* and by *The Castle* for a good many years now, since early youth. Some of these books at first rejected by me; I bored them. But as I grew older, they came to have more sympathy with me and to understand my hidden meanings."

The point Trilling made applies not only to liberal learning. It suggests that all learning has its proper season. We may not always pursue the right kind of learning at the right time. But the worst we could do would be to keep thinking the right time was invariably behind us.

As we think about our immediate educational problems, our expectations and shortcomings, let us think also of different ways to control and direct education—parent education; changing patterns of education for youth; recurrent education.

Our University of the State of New York is uniquely constituted to be a major educational force at the different stages of learning, comprehending as it does both formal and informal educational and cultural institutions that now serve all ages through many forms of learning.

Our University system has a unique opportunity to foster new relationships among educational institutions and between cultural and educational institutions to serve our people in changing stages of learning. The adjustments to new economic and demographic conditions require no less than our sustained and comprehensive thought in this direction.

A focus on the meaning of education to adults may seem too narrow, but I contend this focus can strengthen all levels of education. Our children take their cues from us on what is valued. We are models for young learners, not in our rhetoric but in our actions. They will consider education important if we do ourselves.

Two centuries ago John Jay charged The University to "teach the rising generation to be free." Today I suggest we might alter that charge to teach not just the "rising," but all generations to be free.

Thank you.

## THE PLATFORM PARTY

**The President of The University and Commissioner of Education:**  
GORDON M. AMBACH

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**The Chancellor of The University:** THEODORE M. BLACK

**The Grand Marshal:** JOHN G. BROUGHTON, *Associate Commissioner  
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